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Wednesday, February 21, 2018 metro.us | t: MetroPhilly | f: MetroPh

SHOULD THEY STAY OR SHOULD THEY GO?

Breaking down the Eagles' toughest free agent decisions 18-19

Philly activists ask Toomey to step up gun violence fight. 6-7

5 free historic sites in Philadelphia. 14-15

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SPRING FLING

Things are finally starting to heat up, with possible record-breaking temperatures expected today. But is this warm-weather flirtation here to stay, or is it just a tease? 4

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WELCOME TO METRO PHILLY

KRISTIN TOUSSAINT, REPORTER

Are you ready for warm weather again? Wednesday will feel like spring, with temperatures so high along the East Coast, forecasters are anticipating the weather will break multiple records. But is this an early sign of spring or just a fluke? I reached out to meteorologists at the National Weather Service to hear how unusual this February warmth is. Read more on page 4 and at **metro.us.**

NEW PRESSURE ON TRUMP CAMPAIGN AIDES

1 U.S. Special Counsel Robert Mueller on Tuesday stepped up pressure on two former Trump campaign aides, Paul Manafort and Rick Gates, to cooperate in his probe into possible collusion with Russia. Attorney Alex van der Zwaan, son-in-law of one of Russia's richest men, pleaded guilty in U.S. District Court in D.C. to a charge of lying to the Special Counsel's office. The case involves work that van der Zwaan, a 33-year-old Dutch citizen, performed in 2012 for Manafort and Gates, senior officials in Trump's 2016 election campaign. The two former aides have been charged with conspiracy to launder money and failure to register as foreign agents related to work for a pro-Russia Ukrainian party. The charge against van der Zwaan make no reference to the 2016 election.

IMDB CAN SHOW ACTORS' AGES, SAYS JUDGE

2 A federal judge on Tuesday declared unconstitutional a California law requiring IMDb, the movie and television information website, to remove actors' ages at their request. U.S. District Judge Vince Chhabria said the law violated the First Amendment rights of IMDb, a unit of Amazon.com Inc that challenged the law, by singling out age data for special treatment, despite being intended to serve the compelling interest of curbing age discrimination in Hollywood. "Regulation of speech must be a last resort," the San Francisco-based judge wrote. Chhabria said the California law's advocates "seem to misunderstand" that the real problem might be gender discrimination. The 2016 law drew support from SAG-AFTRA, a union representing some 160,000 actors, broadcast journalists and other media professionals, plans to appeal.

INDONESIA VOLCANO

3 An Indonesian man takes a picture of Mount Sinabung volcano as it spews thick volcanic ash into the air in Karo, North Sumatra, on Monday. Sinabung roared back to life in 2010 for the first time in 400 years and has remained highly active since.

GETTY IMAGES

5 THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW

TRUMP MOVES TO OUTLAW 'BUMP STOCKS'

4 President Trump said on Tuesday his administration would take steps to outlaw an accessory enabling a rifle to shoot hundreds of rounds a minute, as the White House added he may consider other firearms restrictions after last week's Florida school shooting. "I signed a memorandum directing the attorney general to propose regulations to ban all devices that turn legal weapons into machine guns," Trump told an event. The move bypasses Congress, where legislation to ban "bump stocks" has stalled since an October massacre in Las Vegas that killed 58 people. It puts Trump at odds with powerful gun rights groups like the NRA that opposed such efforts This came shortly after spokeswoman Sarah Sanders said he would consider raising the minimum age for buyers of the assault-style rifle used last week.

UBER CEO SEES COMMERCIAL FLYING TAXIS

5 Uber Technologies Inc. CEO Dara Khosrowshahi said on Tuesday he can see commercialization of the Uber Air flying taxi service happening within five to 10 years. The U.S. ride-hailing app maker has said it expects flying vehicles to eventually become an affordable method of mass transportation.

DARA KHOSROWSHAHI, GETTY IMAGES

Khosrowshahi was speaking at an investor forum in Tokyo on his first visit to Asia as Uber CEO. Ride-hailing firms such as Uber see populous Japan as a potentially lucrative market and are pressing regulators to ease stringent rules governing the taxi industry.

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Springlike weather bringing record high temperatures to Northeast

Today's high temperatures may edge out previous records from the early 1900s.

KRISTIN TOUSSAINT
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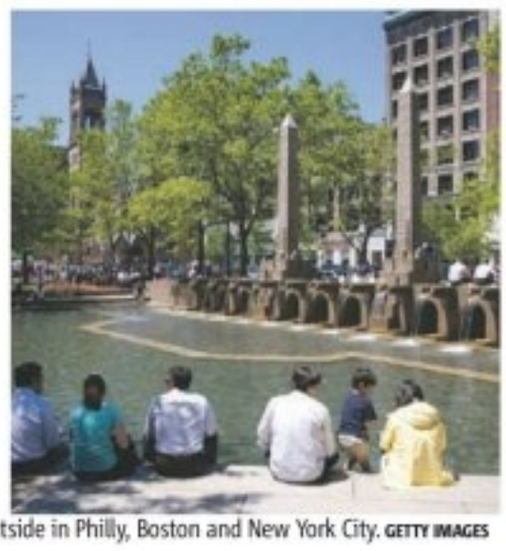

Wednesday will be a good day to spend some time outside in Philly, Boston and New York City. GETTY IMAGES

Are you feeling spring fever? Temperatures could hit record highs this week, giving an early taste of the warmer season.

"The whole eastern part of the country is feeling the effects of this unseasonable warmth," said Kim Buttrick, meteorologist with the National Weather Service Boston office.

On Tuesday, temps along the East Coast were higher than average for this time of year, climbing higher than 60 degrees in Boston. The city's normal high this time of year is 40 degrees, Buttrick said.

Wednesday will be even warmer, with the high expected to reach 70.

"In fact, records are likely to be broken," Buttrick said. "For Feb. 21, the record high in Boston is 63 degrees, which was set in 1906."

New York City will feel the warmth as well, possibly breaking the previous record, though it could be too close to call it a sure shot right now, said Jay Engle from the NWS New York City office.

The record high for Feb. 21 in New York City is 68 degrees, set in 1930. Forecasters are predicting it'll hit near 70 degrees, but some fog in the morning could affect how quickly things warm up and how high the temperature gets overall.

"We're getting close to or maybe just barely breaking the record, but I wouldn't call it a high confidence forecast for a new record — it's about 50-50," he said. "We are confident we'll get high above normal."

Though a record high might be surprising to those who still shudder remembering the brutal cold snap the city got earlier in the winter, Engle said it isn't rare to get record highs and lows in the same season.

And though temperatures won't stay this high for very long, "we are looking for relatively mild weather to continue pretty much to end of the month," Engle said.

Here in Philadelphia, Wednesday is expected to be 73 degrees, just barely breaking the record high of 72, set in 1930.

This doesn't necessarily mean we're full on into spring, though, warned Paul Fitzsimmons of the NWS Philadelphia office.

"The pattern for the next week or two does look to be staying relatively mild, not this warm but mild — but even so, you can still get wintry weather right through March," he said.

Though these highs are not normal for this time of year, meteorologists said that big swings in temperature (like how some areas on the East Coast just saw snow and previously had below-average frigid temps earlier this winter) throughout the season are common.

TODAY'S FORECASTED RECORD TEMPS

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About 100 people rallied against gun violence outside of Sen. Pat Toomey's Philadelphia office in Old City, on Tuesday. CHARLES MOSTOLLER

Philly activists demand Sen. Toomey's support in ending school shootings

Activists rallied outside U.S. Sen. Pat Toomey's Philly office to demand action on gun violence.

SAM NEWHOUSE
sam.newhouse@metro.us

In 1999, after the Columbine High School massacre in Littleton, Colorado, school children in the Philadelphia area started safety drills to prepare for the chance of what is now known as an "active shooter."

A now 59-year-old Delaware County mother of twin boys who were in different first-grade classes recalled her sons coming home with two very different stories about why they were trained to turn off the lights, lock the doors and sit quietly. One boy's teacher told the class it was in case a deer broke into the school.

"The other said, while he was eating, 'That, or some guy with a gun,'" recalled the mother, Ina, who declined to give her last name due to receiving threats in the past for speaking out against gun violence. "I didn't want them to go to school scared."

But nearly 20 years later, in the wake of the Parkland, Florida, school shooting last week, American schoolchildren, teachers and parents are still just as scared for their safety. In Colorado, some teachers training students for lockdowns supply each student with a "Go Buckets," containing snacks for a potential hours-long lockdown, and packets of kitty litter, if they need to go to the bathroom. And on Tuesday, Ina and other concerned activists, moms and politicians rallied in Philly outside the office of U.S. Sen. Pat Toomey (R-Pa.) to demand action.

Participants said they want Toomey to join the movement to curb domestic sales of powerful, rapid-fire guns like the AR-15 that 19-year-old Parkland shooter Nikolas Cruz used to kill 18 students and teachers at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High. While some activists held posters accusing Toomey of being "complicit" with gun violence, organizers said they actually want his help in ending the scourge of mass shootings in the U.S.

"Because of Toomey-Manchin [a bill to strengthen background checks] in 2013, which failed, he was endorsed by Americans for Responsible Solutions, Gabby Giffords' group, and Everytown [started by Michael Bloomberg]. He really hasn't done anything significant since then," said Rosalind Holtzman, organizer of "Tuesdays with Toomey," a group that has held weekly protests with varying degrees of attendance outside Toomey's Philadelphia offices since he won re-election in 2016.

"He ran on that, he won [in 2016] on that. So where is his action? How does he deserve that?" Holtzman asked. "There are people that are just NRA loyalists, and Toomey is a fence-straddler. If not him, who?"

Toomey's office argued in response that the senator stands out in the GOP for his work on gun issues. Beyond the Toomey-Manchin bill, he also is co-sponsoring the bipartisan "Fix NICS" proposal that aims to strengthen the federal system for criminal background checks before gun sales.

"Sen. Toomey's bipartisan work in support of stronger background checks represent the closest Congress has come to improving gun safety laws in decades," a spokesman for the office said. "This is why serious gun

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safety groups, like those led by Gabby Giffords, Michael Bloomberg, and Sandy Hook families, have worked with Sen. Toomey and appreciate his efforts. Claims that Senator Toomey has not worked to make progress on common sense gun safety efforts are not true and have been debunked by independent fact checkers."

Whatever Toomey's efforts are, activists are likely to keep pushing him and other Republicans toward even more dramatic action.

"Gun violence is a constant source of anxiety as a mayor," said John Fetterman, the mayor of Braddock, Pennsylvania, who attended Tuesday's rally. "If you're a gun-owner, you should want the most responsible gun laws possible, and I think most gun-owners want that. ... To reach critical mass, we need to get Republicans on board."

Fetterman, who ran unsuccessfully in the 2016 Democratic primary for Toomey's seat and will run for lieutenant governor, is known for tattooing on his right arm the date of every homicide in Braddock since he took office in 2005.

"This one was my first time seeing what assault rifle rounds do to a human," he said, pointing to a May 2008 date. "Anyone who sees what that does to a human body, and still defends the right to buy them, is just beyond words to me — it's insane."

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The plans won't include the Obamacare benefits like maternity coverage and the guarantee of insurance regardless of health. GETTY IMAGES

Outside of Obamacare US to extend skimpy health insurance

The short-term plans could be available for up to one year.

The U.S. government on Tuesday proposed extending the availability of skimpy health insurance plans to millions of Americans in another Trump administration move to undercut the requirements of the Affordable Care Act, often called Obamacare.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services issued a proposed rule that such plans, now available only for periods of three months or less, will be available for up to 12 months. The agency is considering whether these plans will be renewable.

The plans will not include the defining benefits of the insurance created under former President Barack Obama, including required health benefits such as maternity coverage and the guarantee of insurance regardless of health.

Obamacare currently allows for such short-duration plans, but they are limited to three months. The agency said it expects 100,000 to 200,000 people to shift from an Obamacare plan to such insurance in 2019 when the rule would go into effect, but that millions more people who have no insurance will likely sign up.

Health and Human Services Secretary Alex Azar, who began serving in his post less than a month ago, said in his first media briefing on Tuesday that the proposed rule marked "an important first step." He said the administration is working on additional policies to provide cheaper health insurance options for consumers.

America's Health Insurance Plans, the biggest U.S. health industry lobby, said it was concerned the expansion would make it more expensive to cover the sicker people, particularly those with pre-existing conditions, who remain on the Obamacare marketplace. About 10 million people are enrolled in Obamacare plans that are eligible for income-based subsidies.

Evercore ISI analyst Michael Newshel said in a research note that while the magnitude of the new rule's impact is debatable, directionally it is "another negative more for the stability of the individual insurance market."

While the magnitude of the new rule's impact is debatable, directionally it is "another negative more for the stability of the individual insurance market."

Michael Newshel, Evercore ISI analyst

The premiums on the plans have been rising each year since the marketplace was launched and increased by double digits in 2018, reflecting a costly pool of members, fewer insurers and less competition and the government's decision to pull billions of dollars in payments to insurers.

Republican President Donald Trump last year issued an executive order requiring the agency, which oversees the Obamacare individual market, to propose such a rule as part of its goal to make health insurance more affordable. The order also required an extension of association-based health plans that do not comply with Obamacare and more use of tax-free health savings accounts.

U.S. health officials said they did not expect the introduction of the plans to contribute to a rise in premiums in the ACA marketplace. REUTERS

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Florida teens travel to state capital demanding action on guns

Students who survived last week's school shooting in Parkland, Florida, have promised they will push for action. GETTY IMAGES

Busloads of Florida students headed on Tuesday to the state capital Tallahassee to call for a ban on assault rifles, pressing on with protests after a shooting rampage at a high school that killed 17 teens and educators. The students were in the capital as legistators rejected a motion to vote on a bill banning assault rifles like the one used in the attack.

Last week's killing, the second-deadliest shooting at a public school in U.S. history, has inflamed a national debate about gun rights and prompted teens from Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School and across the United States to demand legislative action. The incident has galvanized advocates for stricter gun controls, including many survivors of the shooting.

A Washington Post/ABC News opinion poll released on Tuesday showed that 77 percent of Americans believe the Republican-controlled Congress is not doing enough to prevent mass shootings, with 62 percent saying President Donald Trump, also a Republican, has not done enough on that front.

Students who survived the shooting have promised they will push for action. Jaclyn Corin, a 17-year-old junior at the school in Parkland near Fort Lauderdale, said on Twitter that she had secured a meeting with Florida's Republican Governor, Rick Scott, on the issue.

Scott spokeswoman Lauren Schenone confirmed the governor would be "meeting survivors later this week."

Nikolas Cruz, 19, is accused of returning to the high school from which he had been expelled and opening fire with a semiautomatic AR-15 assault rifle on Feb. 14. He faces 17 counts of premeditated murder.

Students, many of whom have grown up in a world where they regularly train for the possibility of being targeted by a shooter on the loose, teachers and gun safety advocates were due to gather in Tallahassee on Wednesday to demand that state lawmakers enact a ban on the sale of assault weapons in Florida.

Gun ownership is protected by the Second Amendment of the U.S. Constitution and remains one of the nation's more divisive issues. The Washington Post/ABC News poll found that fewer than seven in 10 Republicans support the idea of a ban on assault weapons, the reverse of Democrats, 71 percent of whom support it. A federal ban on assault weapons, in force for 10 years, expired in 2004.

The suspect, whose mother died in November, was investigated by authorities after videos surfaced on the social media platform Snapchat, showing him cutting himself, an assessment by Florida's Department of Children and Families said. REUTERS

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GOP to sue over mostly-Democratic court's proposed redistricting

Republicans prep challenge to redrawn map seen as boosting opponents and crafted by state's mostly Democratic state Supreme Court.

The National Republican Congressional Committee (NRCC) announced it will to block the proposed new map of Pennsylvania's U.S. congressional voting districts released Monday by the state's majority-Democrat Supreme Court.

"State and federal GOP officials will sue in federal court as soon as tomorrow to prevent the new partisan map from taking effect," NRCC communications director Matt Gorman said in a statement on Tuesday. "The suit will highlight the state supreme court's rushed decision that created chaos, confusion, and unnecessary expense in the 2018 election cycle."

Pennsylvania's state Supreme Court of five Democrats and two Republican judges, issued a map on Monday, saying it was based on "traditional criteria" after rejecting a proposal drawn up by Republican lawmakers as unconstitutional.

The state Supreme Court had ruled that the Republican plan effectively marginalized likely Democratic voters. As a result, the Republicans have a more than 2-1 advantage in the state's House of Representatives, even though the number of registered Republicans and Democrats in Pennsylvania is roughly even.

The court-imposed plan could help Democrats who want to gain control of the U.S. Congress in the November midterm elections.

The new map "is composed of congressional districts which follow the traditional redistricting criteria of compactness, contiguity, equality of population, and respect for the integrity of political subdivisions,"

the court's order said.

State Republican leaders condemned the new map, saying the court was usurping the powers of the legislative and executive branches.

"We anticipate further action in federal court" to challenge the new boundaries, state Senate President Pro Tem Joe Scarnati and state House Speaker Mike Turzai said in a statement.

Susan Carty, president of the League of Women Voters of Pennsylvania, which was among 19 plaintiffs in the lawsuit, said lawmakers should heed the ruling.

"To avoid future gerrymanders and court intervention, the legislature should now work toward creating an independent, impartial and accountable redistricting process," she said in a statement.

The justices redrew the boundaries with the help of independent experts after Democratic Governor Tom Wolf last week rejected a proposal drawn by GOP legislators as unfairly skewed in their party's favor.

Legal battles are playing out in several U.S. states over gerrymandering, when district lines are manipulated to favor one party. Pennsylvania has been seen as one of the worst offenders, with one of its districts nicknamed "Goofy Kicking Donald Duck," a reference to a cartoon image evoked by its odd shape.

The state Supreme Court released a new district map that favors Democrats and modifies what it said was a Republican-gerrymandered version. PROVIDED

Pennsylvania is a contested swing state, and the redistricting is expected to boost Democrats' chances of winning several House seats in November.

Democrats need 24 seats nationwide to take control of the House from Republicans. Republicans hold 13 of Pennsylvania's 18 congressional seats.

The new map means that Democrats could win up to 11 seats in Pennsylvania in midterm elections, said Michael Li, a lawyer with the Brennan Center for Justice at New York University's law school, which filed an amicus brief in the case.

"This is the map that many people think is natural for Pennsylvania, which is a 50-50 state, a classic battleground, but hasn't performed that way in terms of congressional elections for decades," he said by telephone.

The Republican-controlled legislature created the current map in 2011, after the 2010 U.S. census. The U.S. Supreme Court rejected Republicans' appeal of the state court's January ruling striking down the boundaries. REUTERS

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Alex Garland doesn't want a pat on the back

The "Annihilation" director on his star-studded, all-female cast and inspiration.

GREGORY WAKEMAN
Gregory.Wakeman@metro.us

Natalie Portman stars in the sci-fi horror fantasy.
PARAMOUNT PICTURES

"Annihilation" is a defiantly original film.

It has stunning visuals and a peculiar atmosphere, and bravely deviates from Jeff VanderMeer's source material. And it has been widely praised for its predominantly female cast, starring Natalie Portman, Jennifer Jason Leigh, Gina Rodriguez, and Tessa Thompson.

But writer and director Alex Garland doesn't want to be recognized for the casting. Instead, he wants to focus on the unusual originality of the film, which follows the four women as scientists that enter an environmental disaster zone, only to be confronted by a series of psychological and indefinable obstacles. Over the phone, Garland talks adapting the source material, his influences and never dumbing down his movies.

How did you first come across Jeff VanderMeer's novel?

I was in postproduction on "Ex Machina," and one of the producers, Scott Rudin, said he wanted me to take a look at adapting it. It was very original, and that in itself was unusual. Most books and movies are in some way a repetition of other stories. It is unusual to find a one-off, something that is only like itself.

What did you want to bring to the big-screen from the novel?

The fundamentals of the book are in the film. It's team of female scientists entering a sealed off area and a trippy, dreamlike, and hallucinogenic environment. It's got some structural differences. I knew that I needed to be true to the atmosphere. I wanted to try to recreate the feeling I had when I first read it.

GETTY

What was the appeal of a predominantly female cast?

The thing that I thought was most interesting was the absence of a conversation about the scientists being female. I'm steering clear of it to try and preserve the absence of the conversation. That's where the point resides. It would be undermining the purpose to start drawing attention to it.

There's a lot of science and jargon in "Annihilation," did you ever consider dumbing it down for a wider audience?

I'm definitely not trying to make this for as big an audience as possible. I never think about that. And the box office for my films demonstrates that, I think. I have never had a mainstream hit and I can't imagine I will. I had an accidental one years ago when I wrote 'The Beach,' which was trippy, druggy and somehow popped into the mainstream.

You can feel aspects of "Alien" and "2001: A Space Odyssey" when watching the film, talk about their influence.

I think they are present just because I have seen them. And they are films that I really, really like. Are they going to be an influence? Definitely. But one of the films I was most conscious of when making it was an old Walter Hill movie called "Southern Comfort" and "Apocalypse Now." It is really a journey through countryside that is getting progressively more surreal and extreme as you get deeper in.

"Annihilation" is in theaters Feb. 23.

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the word

The future Mr. & Mrs. Birdperson

Congratulations, we guess!
ALL PHOTOS GETTY IMAGES

Toni Braxton and Birdman are getting married — for real this time. As a person whose formative years were shaped by Braxton's debut album, this news … confuses me.

In the season six trailer for "Braxton Family Values," the 50-year-old shows off a gigantic canary-yellow engagement ring and states the obvious. "I have an announcement to make," she tells her sisters. "I'm engaged!"

Birdman, 49 — who is most famous for charming lil' diddies like "Stuntin' Like My Daddy" — and Braxton have known each other for about 16 years. And the "Unbreak My Heart" singer loves how gentlemanly he is.

"He's a gentleman," she said in January on "The Angie Martinez Show." "He's such a gentleman. Opening doors … I promise you." Neat-o!

Well, then. Have a great engagement, future Mr. and Mrs. Birdman. Or should I say, Birdwoman?

Justin Theroux was too edgy

Last week, Jennifer Aniston and Justin Theroux announced their "mutual and lovingly made" decision to part ways. But things might not be as peachy keen as they seem.

Sources close to Theroux have told Page Six that Theroux was just too edgy to be in a relationship with the former "Friends" star.

"Jennifer is more comfortable in Los Angeles with her close-knit group of friends," the source told the site. "Justin doesn't feel as at home in LA, nor with Jennifer's friends, he loves New York, and the edgier crowd in the city.

"He's very focused on himself and his craft," the source continued. "And Jen is not the easygoing girl she wants the public to think she is. She isn't as happy and she is far more complicated." God forbid a lady be complicated, man!

Anyway, best wishes to Aniston, who will be just fine. Perhaps even better after this split!

Whatever, my dude!

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5 Free historic sites in Philadelphia

On a budget? Not a problem!

JENNIFER LOGUE
jennifer.logue@metro.us

Edgar Allan Poe is said to have spent his most productive years in Philadelphia, writing works like "The Tell-Tale Heart."
R. KENNEDY FOR VISIT PHILLY

Looking for free historic sites to visit in Philadelphia? Locals and tourists alike can take advantage of a number of top attractions that have no admission fee. From the Edgar Allan Poe National Historic Site to Independence Hall National Park, you don't need to sacrifice your education just because your bank account is on a diet. Here are five free historic sites in Philadelphia.

Edgar Allan Poe National Historic Site
532 N. 7th St.
nps.gov/edal
Edgar Allan Poe spent a number of years living in Philadelphia, writing short stories like "The Black Cat." Take a free tour led by a park ranger in his Spring Garden home, where he worked as well as cared for his sick wife.

Independence National Historical Park
6th & Market Streets
nps.gov/inde
If you're an American history buff, why not begin your exploration of Philadelphia where our nation was born? Independence National Historical Park includes the Liberty Bell, The President's House: Freedom and Slavery in the Making of a New Nation and Independence Hall. You can get timed tickets free on the day of the tour at the Independence Visitor's Center, but if you want to get them online in advance, there's a $1.50 fee per ticket. Bonus: In January and February, no tickets are required.

National Museum of American Jewish History
101 S. Independence Mall East, nmajh.org
Get free access to the ground-level Only in America Gallery/Hall of Fame in the National Museum of American Jewish History, which

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Whether you feel like soaking up history or going for a jog, Valley Forge National Historical Park is free to visit. G. WIDMAN FOR VISIT PHILLY

features 19 noteworthy Jewish-Americans. See artifacts like Albert Einstein's pipe and Steven Spielberg's Super 8 Camera without paying a penny.

United States Mint
5th & Arch Streets
usmint.gov
It's kind of ironic that going to a place where money is "minted" would be free, but it is. Watch the production of coins from 40 feet above the floor of the factory and even get up close and personal with the first coining press in the nation. Audio and video stations are also available to further enhance your self-guided tour.

Spend a day exploring Independence Hall National Historical Park without spending a penny on admission fees. J. FUSCO FOR VISIT PHILLY

Valley Forge National Historic Park
1400 N. Outer Line Drive, King of Prussia
nps.gov/vafo
OK, so Valley Forge is a little bit outside Philadelphia, but it's a major historic site and it's free to visit. Gen. George Washington's Continental Army battled a bitter winter here during the Revolutionary War. Visitors can check out Washington's headquarters and more monuments. You can even call (484) 396-1018 for a free self-guided tour over the phone. If you're not in the mood for history, the park itself is perfect for a day of hiking, biking or jogging.

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home

Margs, sweet potatoes and chil(*i*)

Tomorrow is National Margarita Day, National Chili Day and National Cook a Sweet Potato Day. We think you should combine all three.

KATE MOONEY
kate.mooney@metro.us

This Thursday we're treated to a delicious combo of culinary observances, according to the National Day Calendar. For reasons unknown, the very official holiday calendar has National Margarita Day, National Chili Day and National Cook a Sweet Potato Day all scheduled on the lineup.

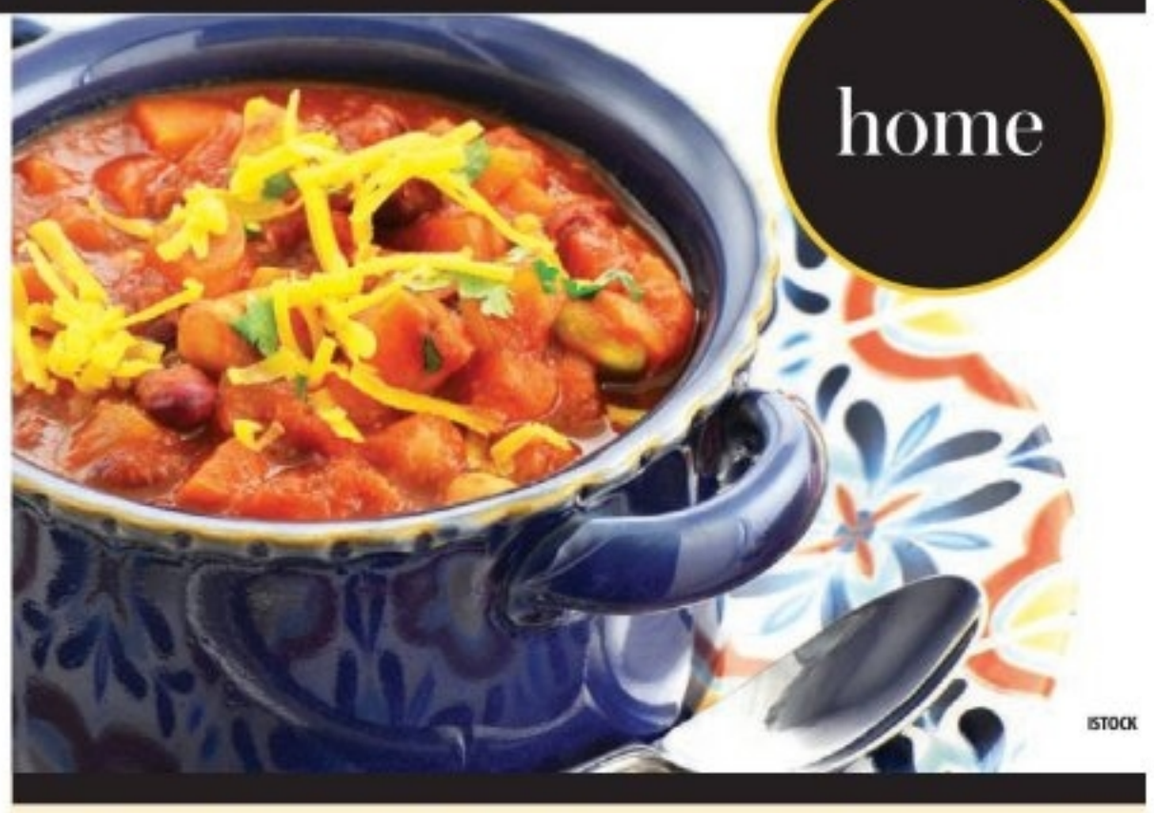
Luckily, these food and drink stuffs go together nicely. There's no good reason why you shouldn't whip up a batch of refreshing margs to enjoy with hearty, comforting chili — made healthier and more colorful with the addition of sweet potatoes — tomorrow night for dinner. It's February; you've gotta brighten it up somehow. Here's one way.

Spicy ginger turmeric margaritas

You don't tend to think of margaritas as a winter beverage, but "Top Chef" host Padma Lakshmi believes tequila is a spirit for all four seasons. Her signature margarita is fresh and flavorful, so you can get in some vitamins and antioxidants with your winter boozing. It combines Patron silver with ginger turmeric simple syrup, fresh lime, fresh mint leaves with a kick — ground turmeric, ancho chili powder and salt for the rim.

Sweet potato chili

Add sweet potato to your everyday chili recipe for an extra dose of color and flavor that's also good for you. High in fiber and low in calories, they're also packed with beta carotene (that's what gives them the orange-yellow pigment) and vitamins A and C, antioxidants which are good for the immune system and help prevent against cardiovascular disease and certain cancers. Modify it as you wish — make it vegetarian, or if you're doing Whole 30, hold the beans. And when it comes to toppings — sour cream, avocado, tortilla strips — you name it. We highly recommend preparing your chili in a multicooker, if you've got one, so it can sit all day while you're at work and you can enjoy when you get home.



ISTOCK

Padma's margarita recipe: the ginger turmeric margarita

Margarita:
- 2 oz Patrón Silver
- 1 oz ginger turmeric simple syrup*
- 1 tablespoon fresh lime juice
- 3-4 fresh mint leaves

***Ginger turmeric syrup:**
- 1 cup water
- ¾ cup sugar
- 4 inches fresh ginger root, peeled and sliced
- 1 teaspoon turmeric powder

Rim:
- ½ teaspoon ground turmeric
- ½ teaspoon ancho chili powder
- 2 teaspoons coarse salt

Directions

In a small saucepan, combine sugar, water and sliced ginger. Place over medium heat and bring to boil. Cook until sugar dissolves. Let steep for at least 10 minutes. Add the turmeric powder and stir until incorporated. Strain syrup through a coffee filter.

Combine ancho, turmeric and salt on a small plate and mix to combine. Wet the top of a rocks glass with a wedge of orange and dip in spice mix. Tear mint leaves, and add to a cocktail shaker with ice. Add the Patrón, lime juice and ginger turmeric syrup and shake vigorously.

Pour into prepared rocks glass and garnish with an orange wedge.

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Eagles new offensive coordinator won't be Staley, Birds hire Groh

Frank Reich will be replaced by the Eagles wide receivers coach from last season.

EVAN MACY
evan.macy@metro.us

Groh will become one of Doug Pederson's most influential assistants. GETTY IMAGES

Who are we to question Doug Pederson?

The man called the now infamous "Philly Special" pass from tight end Trey Burton to quarterback Nick Foles on fourth down in the Super Bowl for god's sake.

And so after the curse of winning bucked its ugly head on Pederson's coaching staff with the Eagles — John DiFillippo went from Eagles QB coach to Vikings offensive coordinator replacing Pat Shurmur (the Giants new head coach) and Frank Reich went from Eagles OC to Colts head coach after Patriots OC Josh McDaniels backed out of the gig — Pederson had to make another big decision.

(A sidenote, running Doug Pederson's offense will always be the job of Doug Pederson, who calls his own plays, but the Eagles did need a new offensive coordinator.)

An extensive search it would not be, as the two main candidates down the stretch appeared to be running backs coach Duce Staley, the longest tenured coach on the team and fan favorite, and Mike Groh, a new addition to the staff last season along with Alshon Jeffery who had worked with Groh in Chicago.

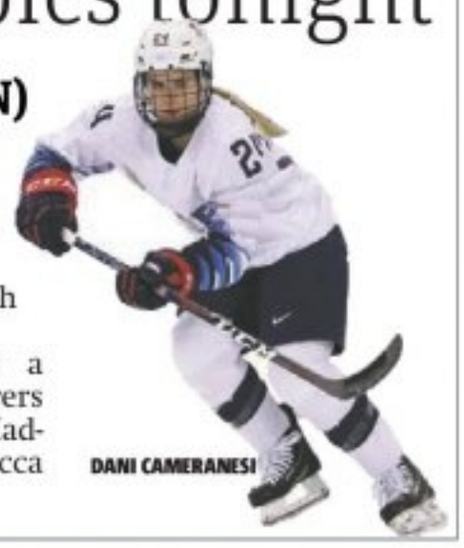
But in a seeming surprise, Pederson went the other way appointing Groh, 46, to the position. The decision was first reported by ESPN's Tim McManus.

Groh played college football but his coaching career started early, as he was an assistant for the Jets under his father, Al Groh. Following his father to the University of Virginia he held several assistant roles during a eight-year stint there, rising to the level of offensive coordinator at the age of 34. Since then, he's coached wide receivers at the University of Alabama, the Bears, the Rams and the Eagles.

It was also reported by McManus that Staley, 42, will remain at his post as running backs coach.

What to watch at the Olympics tonight

WOMEN'S HOCKEY GOLD MEDAL GAME, 11 p.m. (NBCSN)



DANI CAMERANESI

For the fifth time out of six Winter Olympic Games in which women's hockey has been featured, the United States and Canada will compete for the gold medal. For Team USA, it's a chance to secure a second-ever gold medal and regain some power back from the Canadians.

The two teams have already met during the preliminary rounds of this year's Games, with Canada coming out on top 2-1 in Group A action thanks to Genevieve Lacasse's 44 saves on the aggressive Americans.

Dani Cameranesi and Jocelyn Lamoreux-Davidson have led the United States' charge with three goals apiece.

Canada also has a piar of three-goal scorers in four games in Maddie Daoust and Rebecca Johnston. JOE PANTORNO

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Eagles free agents:

LeGarrette Blount and Darren Sproles may have played for the last time as Eagles. GETTY IMAGES

Which members of the Eagles Super Bowl championship-winning squad will be playing elsewhere next season?

LUKE MILLER
sports@metro.us

Before the Eagles can look towards adding players in free agency and the draft they have to focus on keeping their own players at home. Being Super Bowl Champions takes care of half the convincing players to stay argument. But a loaded roster (and the burdensome salary cap that comes with that) might convince some players to look elsewhere for playing time and impressive contracts.

The Eagles roster at the moment is already above the projected salary cap for 2018, so keeping the whole thing intact isn't looking good.

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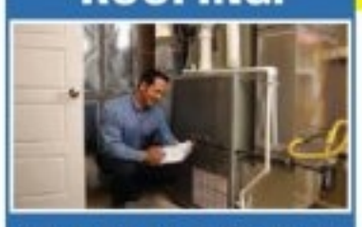

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Who should stay and who should go?

Here's a breakdown of the Eagles' most consequential players out of contract, and how likely it is you'll be able to keep rooting for them in Midnight Green.

Most likely to return

Nigel Bradham
Resigning Nigel Bradham should be the Eagles' top priority among their in-house free agents. He won't come cheap. He signed a two-year, $7 million contract with the Eagles last time around and the valuation for a Super Bowl winning linebacker in the prime of his career (he's 28) will only have increased.

Bradham shone alongside Mychal Kendricks once Jordan Hicks (and eventually Hicks' backup Joe Walker) were lost for the year. He saw the field for 90 percent of the defensive snaps, more than any defender besides Malcolm Jenkins and Jalen Mills. Resigning Bradham may mean the Eagles have to revisit Kendricks trade-talks.

Corey Graham
Graham isn't the same necessity to keep around that Bradham is, but he is a luxury the Eagles can afford. In his first season in Philadelphia Graham played cornerback, safety, and saw the sixth most snaps on special teams. His presence allowed Jenkins and Rodney McLeod, who each played over 99 percent of snaps in 2016, to leave the field and rest in 2017.

Graham provided the secondary with the flexibility to play three safeties while letting Jenkins rove from safety back to nickle back. It was the equivalent of the defensive line's much hyped rotation and depth.

Least likely to return

Patrick Robinson
Robinson was outstanding for the Eagles in 2017. After Ronald Darby injured himself in the first regular season game, Robinson was asked to work outside as well as patrol the slot, and he stole the show in Philadelphia until Darby's return. His brilliance is unfortunately the biggest impediment to the Eagles ability to resign him.

The past season was the best year of Robinson's career, which is one reason the Eagles were able to sign him to a veteran's minimum $775,000 contract last season. That won't be the case this year. Cornerbacks are paid a premium around the NFL, even 30-year olds with a mixed track record of success. With Darby's own cap-friendly rookie contract ending next season and Mills, Sidney Jones, and Rasul Douglas waiting in the wings, the Eagles will be almost forced to turn to their younger players over Robinson.

For much more on the Eagles offseason visit: **metro.us**

Trey Burton
Similarly to Robinson, Burton is unlikely to be back because he's performed so well. He's commanded a lot of money already as a third tight end, receiving the highest restricted free agent tender of $2.7 million a season ago. This off-season on the open market he's likely to command a number too high for even a second string tight end. Burton will be enticed by starting tight end money and starting opportunities by another team.

Caleb Sturgis
Once again, Sturgis is on the outs through no fault of his own. He became the Eagles' kicker after an injury to Cody Parkey, and his own injury has caused him to lose the position. Jake Elliot has done a great job in his absence, setting records from Week 3 through the Super Bowl, and is already under contract. Sturgis will catch on somewhere else.

Toss-ups

LeGarrette Blount and Darren Sproles
We'll hit these two together because there are similar reasons for and against both. Sproles is coming off a devastating injury but has also been the Eagles' most dangerous special teamer since DeSean Jackson, so that's some added value. He doesn't yet seem fond of the idea of retirement. Blount led the Eagles in rushing and had 90 yards against his old team in the Super Bowl.

So why aren't they both locks to come back? Blount is 31 and Sproles is 34. Anything more than a one-year deal is unlikely with Jay Ajayi due his own payday in 2018. The Eagles likely want to see Ajayi in a focal role in the offense before deciding what to do with that payday.

Beau Allen
Allen has been a fixture since the Eagles took him in the seventh round of the 2014 draft, but another team might be interested in seeing how he can do higher up in the pecking order. Like Bennie Logan, who departed the Eagles line last offseason, he could even be considered a better fit in a 3-4.

That doesn't mean the Eagles shouldn't try to keep Allen, but with a ton of money already tied up in their defensive line they may simply prove unable to compete with another team's offer. If that does happen the ability of Brandon Graham and Chris Long to play some snaps inside should help offset the loss.

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- Overweight
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- Not going to bed regularly after midnight or waking up regularly after 9:00 am
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For more information, contact Maddie
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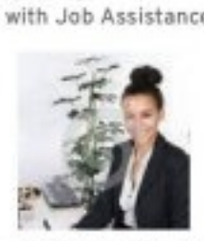

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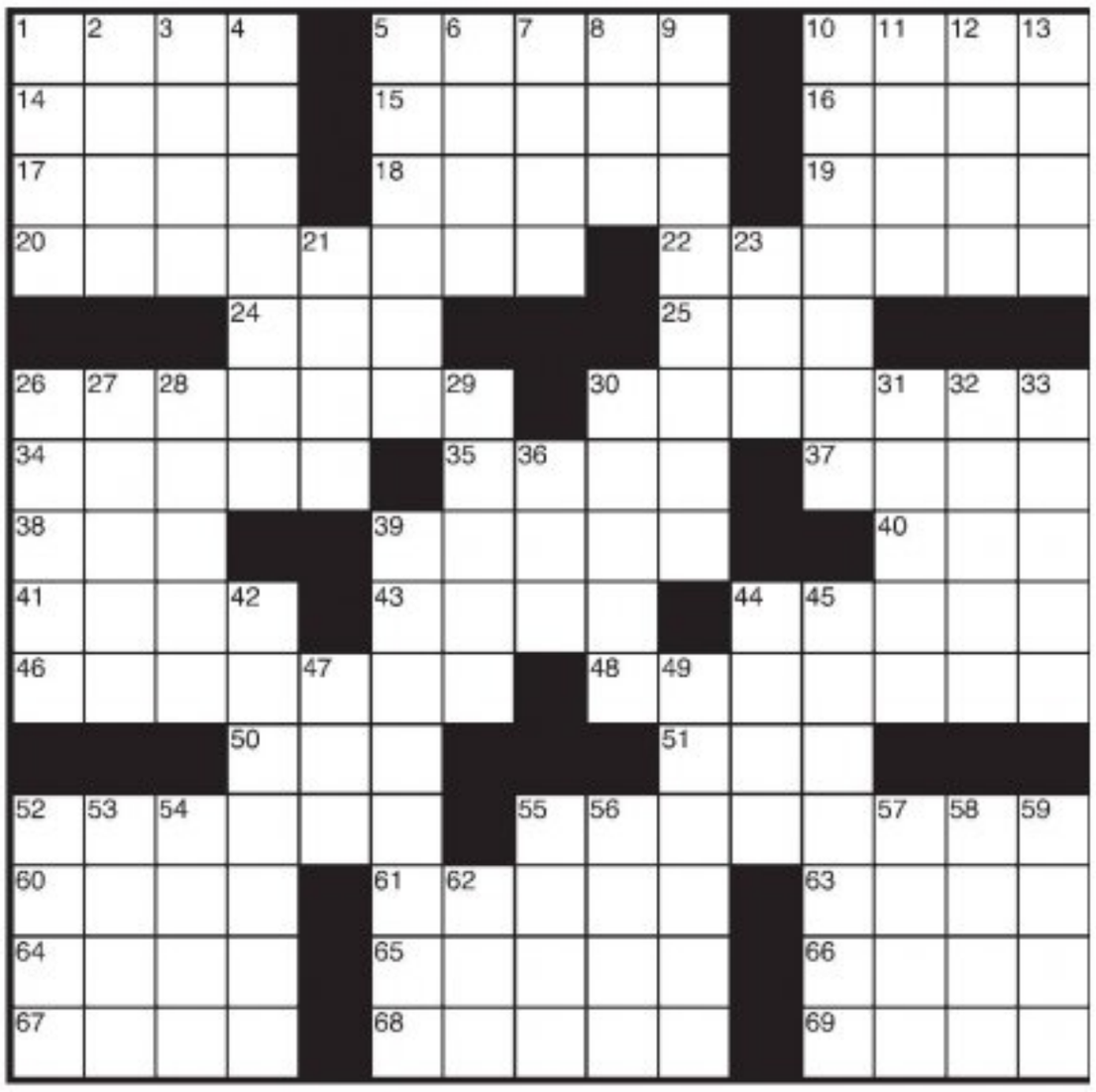

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	7	4		3				2
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	4	2			3			1
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hard

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	4			8			3	
				1			2	7
9		5	2					8

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Aries Harness your energy and your skills and put everything you've got into your responsibilities. Getting ahead takes work and reliability. You'll be judged by your performance.

Taurus Your insight into trends and instinctive knowledge of the best place to put your time and energy will pay off. Romance is on the rise.

Gemini Plan to stabilize your friendships and financial matters by keeping the two separate. Joint ventures are not in your best interest. Enforce proper exercise and diet.

Cancer Working in coordination with someone you find inspiring will bring out your creativity. A unique opportunity will stem from volunteer work. Romance is on the rise.

Leo A joint venture may tempt you, but going it alone is recommended. Alterations to your living space will have to be budgeted carefully. Projects will cost more than anticipated.

Virgo Be open and receptive to new ideas and friendships. Try to understand what others are going through, and offer advice and support. Romance will be enticing and confusing.

Libra Fix up your place and take care of personal responsibilities. Someone will complain if you don't do your share or renege on a promise.

Scorpio Start talking and follow through on your words. Living up to promises and your good ideas will impress others. Love, romance and improvement are highlighted.

Sagittarius Listen carefully, but don't fall for hearsay. Not everything you are told will be legitimate. Make up your own mind.

Capricorn Take hold of whatever situation unfolds and follow through with your plans, no matter what others do. Stability and reliability will win out in the end.

Aquarius Emotions are best controlled. Stay active and avoid emotional situations that lead to temptation and indulgent behavior. Silence is golden. Reconnect with an old friend.

Pisces A business trip or meeting will shed light on new possibilities. Don't be afraid to share your ideas and concerns. Your insight will be welcome and effective. EUGENIA LAST

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U	N	R	A	V	E	L	■	R	A	D	I	A	N	T
R	E	E	S	E	■	G	L	A	D	E	S	■	■	■
E	Y	E	S	■	B	U	O	Y	S	■	D	O	M	E
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HASSMAN RESEARCH INSTITUTE

DEPRESSED?

Are you treating your depression with medication? Are you still feeling depressed?

If so, please call Hassman Research Institute about participating in our research study of an investigational drug for adults with treatment-resistant depression.

Qualified participants must: • Be 18 or older • Be taking prescribed antidepressant medication • Be currently experiencing a depressive episode

Insurance is not required to participate in our study, and all study-related care and study medications are provided at no charge.

Transportation and compensation up to $7,500 for time and travel may be available.

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For more information, call toll-free 866-264-4545 or visit HRITrials.com

www.metro.us